JOHN MARAGON, JR.
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I grew up in McLean. It was a wonderful place to live. I will be ninety this year and look back upon my days in McLean with fond memories. My parents were Helen and John Maragaon. We lived just off Chain Bridge Road on Marion Avenue. This was a street, as was the adjacent Buchanan Avenue, that was composed entirely of newly built Sears & Roebuck houses. I was born in Maryland. My parents later moved to McLean to settle in Walter Heights. This way maybe 1933.

I attended the Franklin Sherman School through the seventh grade. After that I attended Gordon Junior High in Georgetown. After school at Franklin Sherman, the grade school children would rush over to Storm's to buy penny candy. Storm's was a general store and post office located where Listrani's is today. Miss Kidwell was the postmistress. I noticed that Miss Kidwell always had a patient neutral expression on her face. The kids would line up and she would announce who was next. This is small town stuff. Everyone was polite and waited his turn. However, one day a child said, "I want my candy now." Miss Kidwell replied, "You need to be patient. You were third in line." This kid kept on even after he got the warning. He kept on nagging her to give him his candy before the others. He called her an old hag and stomped out of the store. Miss Kidwell politely said, "Excuse me," and went to the phone and called the mother of the boy who was so rude. That mother said, "Thank you." McLean was a small town. Everybody knew everybody and helped each other out. Even the merchants took a hand in child raising.

The Mackall house in Langley always impressed me. Today it is the Country Day School. As kids, we roamed everywhere, particularly the grounds of nearby Salona. There were no swimming pools then. We had fun swimming in Pimmit Run. There was an old road on the edge of the Ballantrae property that ran maybe a half mile through the woods down to the creek. Where Pimmit Run made a big bend was our swimming hole. This was private property. There was a big fireplace down there and picnic tables. No body kicked us out. During the winter months we would ride our sleds on the hill adjacent to Ballantrae. There was more snow then. I had an American Flexible Flyer. This was a well-built sled. This was the first sled that curved the rear runners. There had been no rounding before. Now the sharp edges no longer hurt anybody. I had a good friend named Dariel Knauss who lived three houses away. She had a good friend named Mary Stuelkin. I had a crush on Mary for a while. I would get off the school bus and wink and she would wink back.

During World War II I functioned as an air-raid messenger. This meant that I served as an assistant to the local air-rail warden in the neighborhood. This was Warren Graves, who was the warden until his heart went bad. The siren at the fire house was used as a warning for air raids. When the all clear came, they blew it again. McLean was blessed. We never had an actual air-raid. We went through this procedure in case an enemy came close to the United States. They were known as blackout drills. The warden wore a white arm band which had a blue circle with red stripes. Whenever they blew the siren, I would go to Mr. Graves house and we would begin our walk. Buchanan and Marion Avenues both came off Chain Bridge Road and joined in a U-shaped pattern at the top. That was our route. If someone had a curtain open and a light would shine from the home, I would go up to the house and shout, "Air-raid! Turn off your lights." This was because

enemy aircraft could see lights. Of course, they were not going to bomb Walter Heights. But we still walked the U, making certain that all lights were turned off. As I said, we wore arm bands to identify us and also wore a metal white helmet. This was faithfully done for an air-raid that never happened.

I became a member of the McLean Volunteer Fire Department during my early days in high school. John Carper was the fire chief. He lived on Chain Bridge Road adjacent to the Walter Heights subdivision. Every time the siren went off, it could be heard all over the McLean area. We could hear it in Walter Heights. This sound of the siren meant that all the volunteers needed to report immediately to the fire house. I did not have a driver's license at that time. Mr. Carpet lived a half block from my parents. Upon hearing the siren, I would jog immediately to his house and ride to the station with him. His wife always went with us. The siren was like a police siren, but it was ten times louder. When we went out on a call as teenagers, we rode on the 1938 Chevrolet truck with a 500-gallon water tank. We always rode that. The firemen had built a wooden shelf on each side. This is where the Indian guns were placed. These are five-gallon water pumps that are sort of like a lawn sprayer today, only they are strapped to your back.

In 1948 the post office department issued a three-cent red stamp honoring the 300th anniversary of the volunteer firemen. My father obtained an 8 X 10 page when they were issued. He knew, Jesse Donaldson, the Postmaster General at that time and had him write a personal message at the bottom. My father put the sheet under glass and presented it to the McLean Volunteer Fire Department. This is the only stamp that I know of that honors the nation's volunteer fire departments. My father did all of the legwork on getting this done. I was about 18 and present when he gave it to the firehouse. I consider it quite an honor and pleased that McLean received this. Today it is hanging on a wall at picture level in the fire station on Whittier Avenue. The inscription simply says "To the Volunteer Fire Department of McLean, Virginia, J.M. Donaldson."

Orris Gantt was my uncle. He was my mother's brother. But most importantly, he was McLean's mail carrier. This was rural delivery. When I got my driver's license, I was able to help with the delivery. I got to know all the mail boxes in and about McLean. My route went all the way to the Chain Bridge. One day I drove into the Auchincloss Estate and went in back to the servant's area. I generally tooted my horn, but I didn't have the opportunity that day. Jackie Bouvier (later Kennedy) came out to get the mail. She was anxious to see me. She really wanted to go through her mail. McLean's original post office operated out of Storm's Store. When it closed, the post office moved into a red brick build in back of the store facing Elm Street.

McLean had a 120-pound football team called the Green Hornets. The name was taken from a fictional crime-fighting character on the radio. There was no television at that time. We were looking for something to do. On the porch of Storm's Store were two big grey wooden boxes. It was maybe 3' X 3'. I think the bread people dropped off bread there. They had a flip top with a chain. Lots of times people would be sitting on these. The favorite side of the colored customers was on the left side. There always was a group of colored boys hanging out there. Billy Jones was the captain of our team. Henry Mackall was a half back. Word got out that the colored boys had a team – Springhill. We played on Sundays behind the Franklin Sherman School. Billy arranged for the Green Hornets to play the Springhill team one Sunday afternoon at 1:00. Doug Mackall and I

were too young to play, so we were the water boys. At 1:00 a car drove up and someone said the Springhill team was having trouble getting 11 players, but they were coming.

Well, Billy told Alfred Poole to go up to Springhill and see what was going on. Just before the intersection at Old Dominion Drive and Springhill Road, they were spotted practicing in the woods. It's now about 1:20. Alfred stopped and blew his horn and shouted, "Come on, or we will cancel the game. So, they came and we kicked off. One of their linemen was 6'2". He seemed huge. We had on green and white jerseys; they wore their street clothes. At the half, the score was tied at 0 to 0. In the third quarter, scoring started. By the end of the game, the score was tied at 6 all. No one made the extra point. The two captains shook hands. The Springhill captain said, "Do you want to play again next Sunday?" Billy replied yes, but that he was counting on them showing up at 1:00, not 1:45.

It hit the fan around town. There was citizen protest. How shameful this was. The elders in McLean ruled that we were not permitted to play. All we wanted to do was play. We played Vienna in sand lot football and a couple of teams in Arlington. It didn't make any difference who we played; it was all in the game. As I said, the two captains shook hands after the game, but I believe everyone shook hands after the game and went on their way. There was extreme disappointment among all the players after word reached Billy Jones. We never played the Springhill team again. What a loss! It was a bid disappointment to both sides. It was just a good clean ballgame. Color made no difference.

I started high school attending Western High in the District. I completed one year there. A Miss Deal, was my English teacher. When it was time for your report card to be issued, she would call you up to her desk. I remember her on the day she called me to her desk. She was wearing a blue dress with a white flower and she wore too much rouge. She began to fill out my report card. She had two inkwells – one was blue and the other one was red. She dipped into the blue. I got a C in something. Then she dipped into the red, so that my parents knew that I was failing the grade. Miss Deal took her time, but she dipped her pen into the red inkwell four times! My parents were not happy. They enrolled me at Fishburne Military Academy which is located in Waynesboro, Virginia. There were about 150 boys registered at the time. Fishburne had a policy that if you did well in the first sex weeks, you could study in your room. I flunked two subjects and was put in study hall. There was nothing to do, but study. That's what got me through high school. I graduated in 1948.

I was scheduled to go to the University of Virginia. I received a letter saying that my grades were not acceptable. My father put me in touch with a Virginia Congressman named Bill Tuck who had a long association with UVA. The gentleman who was head of applications for the university said that Fishburne was a fine school, but UVA had a requirement that you had to have graduated in the top half of your class. His name was Ivey Lewis. However, Mr. Lewis said I will do this for you, "If you enroll in the summer program at UVA, taking nine hours, and make a C average we will admit you as a freshman in the fall. So, I did this.

I took my meals in the cafeteria. One day a man named Frank sat down at the table with me. We got to talking. He was an ex GI who served in World War II. He had entered Hampton Sydney College to resume his scholastic career. He needed one more course to finish and was able

to take it at UVA. The course would transfer to Hampton Sydney and he would then graduate. He talked me into going with him to see the college. I remember driving in. There was the football stadium on the left, the college church, a cemetery, and a two-storied white framed house where Dean Wilson lived. This was a small school, consisting of maybe 300 students. Frank rattled an old-fashioned bell. A gentleman of about 6'4" in height appeared saying, "Well, hello Frank. Who is this?" After a few minutes of discussion, Dean Wilson informed us that the school was not taking anybody in, so good bye. That was my introduction to Hampton Sydney. However, I did enroll at Hampton Sydney that fall.

Including myself, there were five boys living in Walter Heights at the time. Just prior to World War II, Warren Graves enrolled at West Point, Ralph Huskey enlisted in the Navy, and Warren Tucker enlisted in the Army Air Corps. Phil Graves and I were too young to be drafted. This must have made some sort of impact on me. It was about late November when President Truman announced that young men were being enlisted to serve in the Korean War. Somehow, Mr. Storm learned that I was on the draft list and told my father. We had time to prepare before I received notice. Warren, Ralph, etc. had done their time, so I decided that it was mine. I went home to McLean to enlist. When my father came down to pick me up, he asked the president of the college to give me a letter to say that I had had two years of college. They had a photostat. We had to go somewhere to have it copied.

I went to the recruiting station in the District. I couldn't find a nearby parking space. Walking down the sidewalk, I saw a sign for the Air Force, which had only been separated from the Army for about one and half years. I saw a large man who shouted, "We are filled up." I pulled out my photocopy to show him and he immediately said, "Get in here." On January 11, 1951, I signed up for four years. About ten days later, I was flown down to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio

Lackland was extremely overcrowded. The reason is that the government overextended itself with recruitments. I was living in a tent. It was cold. This was January. Five men died of overexposure. The Senate called for an investigative committee. Of course, we went through the supplies for uniforms, socks, shirts, etc. I got a size 10½ shoes. At time they were using GI Brogans. They had laces. I had an old pair of black and white Spalding shoes. I went through training in these black and white shoes. So anyhow, it was a symbol of the unavailability of the Air Force to function like the old Army – to run out of shoes was a thing unheard of!

As soon as we finished our basic training, the company I was in had to report to the base hospital for medical training. The Air Force was overcrowded and had made a disaster of over enlistment. This was one example. You didn't have the opportunity to say where you were going. We were assigned to be trained as medics. We found ourselves in the ward room and the air evacuation unit. In Korea, GI's were getting wounded left and right fighting against the Chinese. They were taken to Seoul, the capitol of South Korea. Then the wounded were immediately put on a C-5 transport plane, a large plane with four engines, and flown to a hospital in San Francisco. The next step was Lackland. Whenever the transport came in with the wounded, they sent the medics over to pick up these boys. We would change their bandages, bath them, give them supper, and then carry them to the neighboring airfield to be transported to a designated area on the East coast. We eventually learned what we were supposed to be doing.

It was maybe three years later that the Air Force announced that everyone serving could be honorable discharged. The Air Force was trying to get things in order and was trying to save money by reducing the number of its men. I took the discharge on October 27, 1954. My four-year enlistment time was reduced to three years. I then went back to Hampton Sydney, majoring in liberal arts. So, I received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in 1956.

I was able to receive benefits from the G.I. Bill. In addition to my school tuition, I received $130 a month. I was married then and needed a job. I went to the A&P Store in Farmville and was hired to work in the butcher department for $1.00 an hour. The maximum I could make was $30.00 a week. Something was happening within the chain and I was asked to shorten my hours; thus, I didn't make $30.00 a week. A customer asked me if I would be interested in operating a Texaco Service Station for $40.00 a week. The station was just two blocks up the street. I changed jobs and started managing the Texaco Service Station. It was a large station. The first thing I learned was customer service. When a person pulled up to a pump, I said, "Good morning." Then I would take a paper towel and clean the windshield. I would ask if they wanted me to fill their tank. Nine out of ten times, they agreed to have their tank filled. Then I checked the oil, water, and battery. It was a pretty good sales effort by Texaco. The station also had a sign that read "Registered Restroom." Texaco had stations in all the 48 states. They were supposed to be a superior restroom. The restroom had to be spotless, cleaned every day, etc.

One day a sedan pulled up. I asked the driver if I "could fill her up." For some reason, the man was impressed with the windshield cleaning. His wife got out of the car and asked where the restroom was. I got the keys. She came back and we were finished. However, I asked if I should check the tires and he said, "No." Later Texaco received a letter addressed to the Salaried Person at the Texaco Division Office. The division manager received this letter. It was a complimentary letter written by a U.S. Naval captain stationed in Norfolk. He went on and on with praise. His wife was impressed with the bathroom and he was impressed with the service he received. Before I turned in any charge to the credit card company, I was instructed to get the address of the purchaser and send a post card as a "trick of the trade," saying "thank you for attending our station."

I stuck the Captain's letter in my coat pocket and asked to see Mr. Allen, the division manager. It turned out that there was a Texaco official "high on the totem pole" named Russ Kirby in the office at that time. He said that Mr. Allen had been talking to him about me. I was asked how I was motivated to work at Texaco. I replied that all I knew was working at Texaco and I listened to the Texaco Star Theater with Milton Berle. It had a positive influence on Texaco. I completed a wonderful career with Texaco. I didn't go far up the corporate ladder. I became a real estate agent and my job was to ferret out locations for new Texaco stations. I did this for thirty years.

I am proud of my father, John Maragon, because most children don't leave a foreign country to come to America as a teenager by himself. My father was 10 or 11 when he left Greece. His father, my grandfather, was a storekeeper and had a large family of seven or eight children. Somehow my father learned about America. He was very excited and wanted to go. So, my grandfather took my father and someone else on a bus to Piraeus, which is adjacent to Athens.

They talked to several boat captains who were making the Transatlantic run. My father came across the Atlantic on a freighter and was a stoker. When he arrived at Ellis Island a big hefty police immigration officer asked my father his name. He spelled it M.A.R.I.G.O.S., but he couldn't pronounce the last letter of his name, so they gave him an English name of Maragon.

Somehow, he made friends with an Irish family who lived in Brooklyn. They housed him for about two weeks. Eventually he made enough money to make it west on the rails. He got to Kansas City, Kansas, and set up a shoe shine stand. The place he spotted to do the most business was a "House of Ill Repute." His customers wanted a shine either before or after. One customer never went upstairs. He loved bourbon and water and playing the piano, particularly The Missouri Waltz. Having little money, my father slept on a pool table for ten cents a night. He found a job as a news butcher selling newspapers on a train. He had a big tray and a strap. In the train he carried newspapers, magazines, fruit, sweets, etc. He went from one end of the train to the other. When the train stopped and people got off, he would go back and pick-up left-over newspapers and resell them.

My father learned his English by reading newspapers and asking people questions such as "What does this word mean?" He kept seeing the Word Washington D. C. He would ask, "What is this?" He learned that Washington D. C. was the hub of America. That was all he needed. He saved all his money and made it to Washington. He got off the train at Washington Station where a tall lanky man was loading bags onto a cart. The bags weren't properly secured. The cart hit a rut in the station and the bags flew off the cart. One bag started oozing liquid. My father was walking by and heard the words, "Whose bag is this?" Without hesitation he said that it was his bag. This was about the time that Prohibition was drawing to a close. My father was handcuffed and taken to Precinct 3. During his walk through the station, he saw a very distinguished gentleman wearing a beautiful overcoat and a Holmberg hat. The Holmberg man and he nodded to each other. It wasn't too long before an Irish cop came to the cell block and said, "All right Greek boy, get out of here." Outside, he encountered a chauffeur leaning against an automobile. He inquired if my father was the person who had been booked the day before. He told my father that the person whose liquor-filled bag was dropped would like for him to come to the Senate Building. When he reached the Senate office, he met with Senator Harry Truman who said, that my father saved him from a lot of embarrassment because the suitcase contained bathtub gin. The Senator then asked what he could do for my father. My father asked to be an agent for the Bureau of Investigation. He got the job at $7.00 a day, plus expenses.